

Marital Networks and Political Alliances in Baluchistan, Pakistan

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Abstract *This paper is designed to show the relationship between affinity and political alliances. In kinship ties, descent imposes mutual duties and obligations and is only confined to those who share a common blood. As the blood binds together all those who share a descent, similarly affinity ties non-blood relatives through marriage. While much of the existing literature has been understandably focused on descent lines; however, there is a lack of sufficient study on the role of marital alliances in reproducing the dominance of 'tribally influential families' despite emerging challenges from the intrusion of modern state institutions. Using the example of one of the most powerful political families (Jomezai) in Baluchistan, this article tries to show the significance of exogamous and cross-regional marriages that form political kinship network.*

Key Words: Politics, Marriage, Kahole (Extended Family), Baluchistan

Introduction

Baluchistan has drawn a long list of hostile depictions in the mainstream national and international media. It is painted as a restive province of the country which, according to some observers, is wobbling on the brink of separation. Baluchistan has supposedly been wobbling on the brink of separation for many years; however, such gloomy picture is not more than a political rhetoric. Under the course of broader project of national integration and a cohesive nation building, the province has seen the wrath of many large-scale military operations. Moreover, sectarianism, terrorism, foreign intervention and other similar portrayals are the normal routine. The overall political picture of the province is shown to be kinship driven, which is partially true and is the main focus of the present study.

In the tribal landscape of Baluchistan, three major Kaholes were very popular due to their influence in the areas they live in. These were Jam, Jamali, and Jomezais "3Js". Their influence and power originated from holding large tracts of irrigated lands and their strategic closeness to colonial and post-colonial administrators. In 1947, when Pakistan got independence from the British government, the fate of Baluchistan largely remained the same. Instead of introducing modern state institutions, post-colonial administrators largely encouraged the local tribal chiefs to maintain the centuries-old tribal system intact. The notables played the role of mediators between state and the society. In order to maintain this structure, they relied on local institutions of conflict resolution with regard to land disputes, couple elopement, and murder cases and so on, instead of letting modern institutions of judiciary, and education.

Lack of formal education and job insecurity made the people economically dependent on tribal chiefs. Even for the sake of finding a minor job at a local office, an individual was required to have the

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recommendation of a chief. Similarly, conflict resolution was completely based on the institution of tribal Jirga where conflicts could easily be fabricated and favoritism played a significant part. The social structure of the province was vertically divided between key notables and commoner. In between, the state was meant to play a progressive role, which unfortunately remained a dream only.

Today, the tribal structure of the province is not completely the same as it was more or less fifty to sixty years ago. But still, there are some peripheral areas where the role of tribal chiefs remains central. Ironically, despite the emerging introduction of democratic institutions in the province, the central role of the local chiefs never became less important. Their power and influence may be connected to large land holdings and closeness to state apparatus; however, this is not the complete picture of the story. As the paper argues, the establishment of marital networks across region, tribe and ethnicity is one of the factors which make elites' power and influence unalterably stable.

In this study, the term *Kahole* is used interchangeably with family. Locally, the term means an 'extended family' which includes first and second-degree cousins necessarily not living in joint households. For example, Nawab *Kahole* contains three major families and each family consists of more than hundred members both male and female, but in the area Nawab family is cited as a *Kahole*. Robert N. Pehrson (1968) in his work on the Marris of Kohlu, Baluchistan captures this term frequently used among Marris. The frequent use of the term is common for both Pushtuns and Baluch.

The Jomezais of Killa Saif Ullah

Tehsil Killa Saif Ullah lies between Zhob in the North and Quetta in the South. Historically, it was part of Zhob district until it was given a separate status of district in 1988. Today, it consists of two Tehsils: Muslim Bagh and Killa Saif Ullah. The Tehsil Killa Saif Ullah is primarily inhabited by one of the largest branches of Kakar tribe "Sanzarkhel". Sanzar was the common ancestor of residing tribes of the area, who had twelve sons whose descending kin are the permanent residents of the Tehsil. Out of twelve, Jomezai branch is politically and tribally more important. It is the case not because of its seniority in the patrilineal line but by virtue of its leading role as the tribal chiefs of the area. Jomezai is further divided into two major branches: Nawab Kahole and Sardar Kahole. The current chief of the area is Nawab Muhammad Ayaz Khan Jomezai who belongs to the former whereas Sardar Ali Ahmed Jomezai is the Sardar who is from latter.

The tribal and political picture of Tehsil Killa Saif Ullah is incomplete without giving due attention to the political role of Nawab Kahole. The Kahole has remained politically prominent since the time of Afghan ruler Ahmed Shah Durrani. According to local folk stories, in the eighteenth century the Afghan ruler had to depend largely on residing tribes when he campaigned to invade India. Baikar Neka one of the ancestors of Jomezai Kahla supported the Afghan ruler along with more or less three hundred fellowmen from Zhob and participated enthusiastically in the successful invasion of India.

While returning from India, Ahmed Shah Durrani rewarded Baikar Neka for his valor and support. He was given the title of "Naib-e-Kakaristan" and more importantly, he was gifted a crown locally called Taj as a symbol of dignity and political leadership. When I made a personal visit to one of the family's household, the front wall to the door of the guest room was fully decorated with crown's pictures. The ownership of the 'Taj' is still important because according to the family members, no one can claim and justify the authority without Taj.

At the end of nineteenth century, when the colonial regime formally entered Zhob, the relationship between Nawab and Sardar Kaholes became openly antagonistic. Their supposed bone of contention was political leadership. In Between, the British government favored Nawab Kahole. In 1906, reacting to British intentions a member of Sardar family murdered Bangul Khan Jomezai who belonged to Nawab family. In 1926, Muhmmad Khan Jomezai, the eldest son of Bangul Khan was given the title of Khan Bahadur by the British Government ([Burdett 2011: 00](#)). With the passage of time, the title 'Khan Bahadur' was replaced by the term Nawab.

In the post-partition period, the relationship between both the Kaholes and the newly formed state administrators remained stable. Nawab Muhammad Khan was a staunch supporter and active member of Muslim League in Baluchistan. Within League circles, he was very close to the founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Baluchistan Muslim League's president Qazi Faiz Muhammad Essa. His political affiliation predated 1947 when he made Pushtun belt of Baluchistan a part of Pakistan. The association between Jogezei family and post-partition administration can be gauged given the frequent visits of key officials to the family's mansion.

In 1973, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto visited Killa Saif Ullah after becoming Prime Minister of Pakistan. His visit was followed by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, the subsequent president of Pakistan. There is a popular story about Zia's visit to the family's mansion. When he came to Killa Saif Ullah, Sardar Muhammad Usman Khan Jogezei, one of the leading figures of the family, presented him two gifts: a sword and a knife. Most of the respondents are of the view, he told Zia to take sword for the protection of Islam and knife for the protection of Pakistan. Besides these, chief ministers and governors of the province have frequently visited the family. It has also constructed luxurious rest houses for foreign tourists/visitors. In 2015, American Ambassador David Hale paid a visit to the chief Nawab Muhammad Ayaz Khan Jogezei at his residence, Quetta.

In this brief description, Jogezei Kahole looks like a 'dynasty' consecutively ruling the area for almost a century. It is especially the case given its strong emphasis on 'unity' among its patrilineal descent group members. Its way of living, behaving, and looking are completely different from the neighboring tribes. In a stark contrast to other tribes in the Tehsil, it has never indulged in major disputes within and outside the family. Not only its dynastic network fully explains the whole story, the same is equally true for its exogamous/cross-regional marriage preferences. It has never given a wife in marriage to the non-Jogezei tribes inside the Tehsil. In the past, there have been reported only two cases of wife giving. Preferentially, the family only conducts marriages within Jogezei Kahole. But also, for broader political networking, it marries outside the Tehsil with its 'cultural and economic equals' speaking in Bourdieusian language.

Nawab Agha Khan Jogezei eldest daughter was married to Sardar Mohammad Bahadur Khan Jogezei who was the influential chief of Sardar Kahole. Another daughter of Agha Khan Jogezei has been married to the same Kahole. She was married to Sardar Jahangir Khan Jogezei: the younger brother of Sardar Mohammad Bahadur Khan Jogezei. These marriages have taken place within the lineage but between two different Kaholes of the common ancestor. Some of the respondents from the family viewed that, the intentional move behind marrying within the lineage is to strengthen existing descent lines.

In the descending generation, the preference for endogamy is gradually replaced by exogamy outside the Tehsil. Nawab Fateh Shah Jogezei was the eldest son of Nawab Agha Khan Jogezei. In 1970s, when Nawab Agha Khan died, his headship directly transmitted to Nawab Fateh Shah Khan Jogezei. His eldest daughter was given in marriage to Sardar Azmat Khan Luni who was his tribal counterpart in Tehsil Dukki. Another daughter of Fateh Shah has been married to Rafique Jan from district Loralai. The younger son of Nawab Agha Khan Jogezei was Nawabzada Rehmat Shah who was distinguishably known for having large properties outside the country and within the Tehsil. His eldest daughter has been married to the current chief of the house of Sarawan: Nawab Kamal Khan Raisani. His eldest son, Nawabzada Nawaz Khan Jogezei wife is from Lakki Marwat. His father-in law is Asmat Ullah.

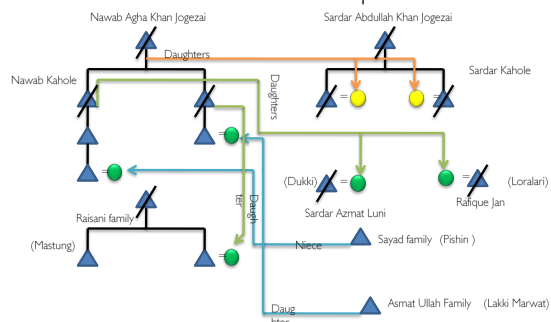


Figure 1: Key Marriages that Consolidate Existing Descent Lines and Broaden more Political Gains.

In figure 1, the obvious central node is Nawab Agha Khan Jogezei. In the given diagram, pink arrows indicate daughters that have been married within the Jogezei Kahole, green lines show married daughters to other families outside the Tehsil and finally blue arrows refer to wives that have been taken from other tribally influential families outside the Tehsil. Surprisingly, there is no exchange of wives in marriage with a single family. Generally, a family which gives a girl in marriage to another family should also take a wife from the same family or vice versa. But it is not the case in the mentioned diagram. In other words, Nawab Agha Khan has given two daughters to the sons of Sardar Abdullah Khan Jogezei, and in return he could have also taken at least a single daughter from the same Kahole for either of his sons. But evidently it has not happened so. Or more specifically, the daughter of Rehmat Shah Jogezei is married to Kamal Khan Raisani, and in return, latter's sister or any other female could also be married to either of former's family members, but has not occurred. When the reasons for such patterns of marriage were asked from the family members, they did not respond satisfactorily.

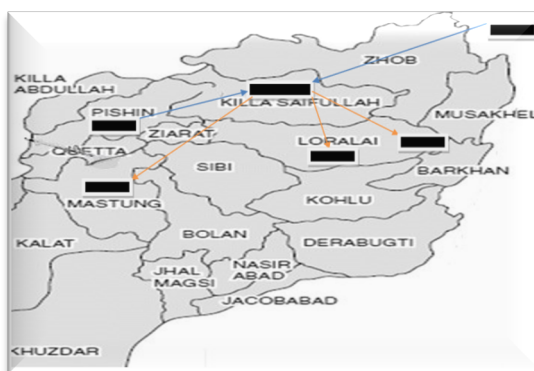


Figure 2: Map of Baluchistan Indicating the Locations of five Areas: Pishin, Loralai, Dukki, Lakki Marwat, and Mastung.

Through marriage, the Jogezei *Kahole*, has built marital alliances that bind them together. After having lengthy discussions with the family members, the reasons for such patterns of marriage are slightly answered in figure 2. Given these patterns of marriage, a popular quotation goes frequently heard, “*Dosti da saloo kalo lyar da*” which literally means (marital alliance lingers for more than hundred years). Here, the quote does not cite consecutive exchange marriages but even a single marriage link is meaningfully enough for establishing marital alliances with a family for more than hundred years. Stephen Lyon (2016) in his study on the Chaudhary of Punjab asserts that, “if a single cousin connection is good, then a double cousin connection is even better”. Put differently, if a single marital connection is good, a double connection with the same family may be better. But this does not hold true for Jogezei family. Subsequently, if a marital link establishes political alliances, why not establish connections with multiple families instead of confining it to a single family through exchange marriages.

Moreover, if Nawab Khan had taken his wife in exchange for Raisani family, he must have been deprived of marital link with the Marwat family. Or, if Nawab Agha Khan had taken wives for his children in exchange from Abdullah Khan, his political alliances must have been very limited. So, a marital link with various families understandably seems to be one of the best tools for expanding political networking.

In addition, the Jogezei Kahole preferentially avoids marriages with the neighboring tribes inside the Tehsil. Among others, one of the reasons for avoidance pertains to the notion of inequality between the family and neighboring tribes in social and economic status. When the reasons were asked from one of the family's members, he said that, “we are the tribal chiefs of this area. We have several political asylum seekers from other districts, which are requested for protection by their tribal chiefs. When they murder someone

in their area, they are tied by the tribal code to leave the area immediately. They flee the area and come to our houses for asylum because they are sent by their chiefs. Here, we give them residence, protection, and partly an economic source of living". According to him, the same thing could also happen to someone from his own area, and by his request the murder would be given asylum in the same manner. For him, asylum seeking seemed to be an exchange between tribal chiefs and this he connected with their marital connections. When I personally discussed the absence of marriage links between the family and neighboring tribes with the chief's nephew, he replied that he had never seen someone inside the Tehsil coming for a marriage proposal. For him, the people never think to come for a marriage proposal.

The day I made a visit to the mansion of another chief, I talked to his subsidiary locally called "Malak" about the exchange of wives between Joegezais and the commoners. He replied that, "If the chief is going to give his daughter in marriage to my son, I will never accept this proposal because my son and my family will not be able to meet her requirements. She belongs to an elite family while my son is from a poor family". The informant was surreptitiously referring to the 'sense of inequality' between his and chief's family. They actually did not share an equal social and economic standing. The justification for this inequality is explained in the coming part of the paper where such a lavish wedding ceremony is never economically afforded by a poor resident from the neighboring tribes.

Elite Families in Baluchistan

In this section, I am going to introduce the major elite families which have built marital links with Joegezais. Initially, it is worth to mention that they do not share a common ancestor, tribe and even geography. For instance, Sayyads of Pishin are linguistically Pushtuns but not genealogically. Similarly, Babu Rafique is a Pujabi whose household is situated in Loralai. In the case of Baluch, they neither share a common ancestor with Joegezais nor geography else, but they have marital alliances with Joezai *Kahole*.

The Baluch belt of Baluchistan is tribally sub-divided into two major parts: house of Sarawan and house of Jhalawan. The house of Jhalawan is geographically extended in the Northern part of the belt whereas the house of Sarawan covers the Southern tribes of the Baluch belt. The house of Sarawan is tribally headed by the tribal chief of Raisani family. Mir Siraj Khan Raisani was the tribal chief of the house of Sarawan. After he was sadly assassinated, his eldest son, Nawab Muhammad Aslam Khan Raisani ascribed the position. Despite having the leadership of Sarawan house, Aslam Khan Raisani also worked as Baluchistan's Chief Minister in the government of Pakistan People Party (2008-2013). Besides this, his younger brother, Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani was Senator of Pakistan. The household of the family is situated in Mastung which is close to the capital of the province, Quetta.

Another family which has given a girl in marriage to Joegezais is from Lakki Marwat: Salim Saif Ullah Khan Family. He is the prominent politician from Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. He held the position of senator and led a faction of Pakistan Muslim League as its president. He is the younger brother of Anwar Saif Ullah Khan, who was federal minister of petroleum, and Humayun Saif Ullah a former member of National Assembly. His mother Begum Kulsum Saif Ullah Khan is an ex-MNA and former federal minister. Also, Salim Saif Ullah is the tribal chief of Marwat tribe in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.

Joezai family has also given a girl in marriage to a Punjabi family from Loralai: Babu Mohammad Rafique's family. After the independence of Pakistan, Babu Rafique settled in Loralai. In fact, he belonged to Punjab and was ethnically a Punjabi but worked as a government official in Baluchistan. Most of the respondents to the question of his wealth are of the view, when Pakistan got independence; the Hindus fled Loralai in large numbers and also left properties in the town. Babu Rafique was already working in a government office and knew well how to officially register properties on his name. Afterward, he remained the member of provincial assembly of West Pakistan from Loralai. He was in the assembly between 1962 till 1969.

District Pishin is tribally and politically popular for the residence of a Sayyad family. The family is famous for holding key official posts. One of its senior members namely Sayed Fazal Agha served as Governor of Baluchistan from 1997-1999. And also remained the deputy Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan from 1988-1999. Alongside key office holdings, the family is quietly distinguished for its social standing. By virtue of being Sayad, it plays a major mediatory part in small scale tribal disputes.

Another elite family is the Luni of Dukki. It is not that popular for key government office holdings. But tribally, it is the most powerful one in the area it lives. The head of the whole Luni tribe belongs to family: Sardar Hashim Khan Luni. He is the chief of his tribe since colonial era. He was conferred the office of Sardar by the British government. This family is holding a lot of agricultural lands in Dukki. Currently, his eldest son is the chief of the Luni tribe.

General Patterns of Marriage

There are no clearly defined marriage patterns or rules in the area under study. Generally, marriage preferences are very complex to the extent where it cannot be totally concluded whether a marriage preference for a partner is an individual decision or the whole *Kahole* is involved. The people consider the institution of marriage a familial affair, where each family is customarily required to take and give wives in marriages under broader social and political settings. They give due attention to the notion of equality in economic and social standing of a marrying partner. Besides this, the status of a family in the overall social context is important for consideration. If marriage partners either male or female does not comply by socially approved rules, he/she is avoided for marriage. The rules are very strict for a female, if she does not meet the terms of being deferential or belonging to a respectful family, she is never preferred for marriage. In fact, it is not an individual who can personally decide and marry a particular partner rather the whole lineage and *Kahole* is taken into account. As a rule, the mother and father of a boy/girl has the authority to wish a girl/boy for son/daughter.

At the outset, marriage partners are not consulted before the submission of marriage proposal. Here 'sexual division of labor' plays a prominent part. After marriage proposal is sent to a family, a boy is indirectly consulted through his mother or elder sister, but in the case of a girl, she is never given this option. She must not even raise a question about her marriage partner. This norm is deeply embedded in the basic unit of social organization which is the *Kahole*. Normally, when after reaching maturity a boy desires to marry a girl the whole household becomes excited, but when the same desire is shown by a girl, the honor of the entire household is challenged.

Generally, endogamy is the most dominant practice among the residing tribes of the area. Preference for a closer relative which is the father's brother's son/daughter is justified by a popular saying, "*Khpal Khpal dey*" implying 'blood is thicker than water' (Rincker & [Jalalzai 2018](#)). As opposed to an individual decision, it is in the wider interests of the whole *Kahole* to find a marriage partner for a boy or girl within the *Kahole*. For a boy, the 'mutually agreed upon' marriage partner should be a closer paternal cousin which is preferred for several reasons. One of the respondents to the question said, "If your wife is your closer cousin, she must take care of your household privacy in case conflicts arise within the *Kahole* (extended family); it happens so because she shares a common descent and honor with you".

The residents of the area never practice endogamy for the sake of securing joint property (land) within the lineage. Fundamentally, women are never given a share of land as inheritance as would be their right according to Islamic law. Some social anthropologists like [Ayoub \(1959\)](#), [Barth \(1986\)](#), and [Berrenberg \(2003\)](#) have closely linked endogamy i.e. Father's Brother's daughter marriage with the idea of securing property within the lineage. But this does not apply to the research locale as the local tribes never give landed property to women. They maintain that women are not physically fit for controlling lands and other economic activities. Women are compensated for the denied inheritance only when they get married. Then they are annually given a small amount of money. Their close male cousins are obliged to visit them

twice a year. They are occasionally invited to their natal home on key events: marriage, circumcision, or birth of a male boy.

Jeanne [Berrenberg \(2003\)](#) has eloquently articulated marriage patterns among the Pushtuns. She asserts that, "Pushtun marriage patterns are strongly influenced by external variables having little to do with endogamy or kinship categories as values in themselves, but rather with economy, politics, and tribal identity and the keeping of boundaries, the latter being of values when economic or political dominance are tied to tribal identity". Despite economic and political concerns, endogamy is practiced because the marrying households have a prior knowledge of each other. There is not a single case, where the *Kaholes* involved do not have prior knowledge with particular reference to family background and the marrying boy/girl because this ensures a prosperous life for partners.

Strengthening one's descent group is highly prioritized. This can be achieved by endogamy. Some of my informants stated that they took wives from within the lineage for giving further strength to their blood lines. According to Barth (1986: 171), "such a pattern of father's brother's daughter marriage plays a prominent role in solidifying the minimal lineage as a corporate group in factional struggle". In selecting a marriage partner for a girl, due attention is only paid to wealth, since the girl should not become financially dependent on her paternal cousins.

Another aspect of practicing endogamy pertains to 'geographical proximity'. The intimate relationship of women with their natal home is not demarcated by the event of marriage. Although a woman is married, her paternal cousins are obliged to take care of her health, protection, honor, and seldom income. In some families, in-laws are still supported financially by their paternal cousins. If a woman is married to a close cousin, she can easily be supported. With regard to geographical proximity, women are more interested than men. During lengthy discussions with elderly women of various villages, they showed interests in marrying their daughters to geographically closer households so that they can visit them easily.

Marital Networks

In this section, I want to briefly describe the patterns of wedding rituals between two quietly dissimilar families. Both stories are based on my personal experience. However, the first one was experienced during my childhood, whereas the second one was experienced when I was in my field work. The stories are based on the wedding ceremonies of two families: one a tribally influential one whereas the other a poor family in the rural area.

In 1998, when I was ten years old, one day early in the morning, I met my village fellows who were close to my age at the time. We were always very watchful of every key event (*gham-shadi*) in the village so that we could go there and entertain ourselves. That day, my friends were told that a sumptuous marriage ceremony was going to take place. It turned out to be a marriage ceremony of an influential tribal chief's son. When we came together to the main city centre, police and militias were deployed for security. Everybody (invited or uninvited) tried to quickly reach the chief's mansion before the guests arrive. The chief guest was the incumbent governor of Baluchistan Miangul Aurengzeb Akhunzada. When we were on the way, the sound of helicopter was heard. It became even more interesting to reach early and see a helicopter landing.

On arrival the chief guest was given a 'guard of honor' by the Police. The ceremony was arranged beside the landing ground. The party was organized on a large tented ground which could possibly accommodate more than two thousand guests. The guests were received by the melodious sounds of a music band. There were two separate portions arranged for guests. Sofas for key guests were fabulously decorated with flowers, while the remaining part of the area was prepared for commoners (almost villagers) with simple but slightly embellished chairs.

The members of the hosting family were seated very close to chief guests. In fact, it could easily be observed that wife-givers and wife-takers were equal with regard to social and economic status. Actually,

the wife giving family belonged to another district of Baluchistan, Quetta. They equally shared social and cultural standings viz. prior knowledge, equality in social and economic positions. The same story is starkly contrasted with a recent visit to a wedding ceremony in one of the villages during my field work.

I stayed in a village “*Shaban*” which is geographically close to Pak-Afghan border. There, I was invited to a wedding ceremony within a household resided by a single lineage. As I went to attend the party, I was warmly welcomed by the groom’s family members. Then I was seated outside the guest room. Actually, there was a small single room poorly decorated with painted flowers on surrounding walls. The guest room was not sufficient for accommodating more than twenty guests; instead the guests were served in three shifts. I was served in the second shift. During lunch, we were served a beef only and after finishing the lunch, I realized to quickly leave the house so that the other guests should be served.

In the afore-mentioned wedding stories, different elements of equality in social and economic standings are manifested. In the wedding ceremony of a chief’s son, the chief guest was the incumbent governor of Baluchistan; the family had arranged a large place for arrangement and served the guests with more than seven types of dishes. In the second story, the economic and social standing of the person did not allow to serve the guests in the same manner. Additionally, he cannot afford to serve more than thousand guests, nor he can imagine inviting a key official. In both the cases, marriage has taken place between ‘equals’.

Conclusion

In the selection of a marriage partner, not only an individual seems to be concerned but the whole lineage and household is equally involved. A *Kahole* normally decides in its broader political objectives. It has to see whether a family for marriage preference is socially and economically equivalent or not. Here, the concept of ‘equality in social and economic standing’ is a driving force for marriage. It is especially the case, given the social and economic standing of an elite family. It is not simply an elite family that can be blamed for avoiding marriages with the neighboring tribes; rather the latter also avoid marrying the former, since they do not stand parallel to elites.

During the fieldwork, one of the limitations was that no interlocutor clearly elaborated concrete political objectives of marital alliances. Some of the informants avoided discussing the candid implications of marriages rather calling it God’s will to decide. Also, lack of visible material objectives does not totally hide the fundamental nature of marriage as a political game. It is especially so among elites. They never expose consequent political objectives of marriages. But marital map helps in understanding the primary goals of marital links. Although *Jogezai* may have a lot of ‘equals’ in the area for marriage alliances, they never either take or give wives in marriage to the neighboring tribes. The *Jogezai Kahole* is more exposed to cosmopolitan cities, which is generally considered an extra element to the existing social and economic standings. Marital links inside the Tehsil may not fulfill broader political objectives, but do so cross-regionally. Actually, the political gains by cross-regional marriage are multiple. For instance, in the case of Nawaz Khan *Jogezai*, when his brother-in law Nawab Kamal Shah Raisani became the Chief Minister of Baluchistan, he was made the Inspector General of Police, Baluchistan. He might not have become so, if his brother-in law had not been the Chief Minister.

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